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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 13 August 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government I have the honour to bring to your attention new grave and illegal actions in the Turkish occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus of the desecration of sacred places of worship which are aimed at the destruction and eradication of the religious and cultural heritage of Cyprus.

According to news reports contained in the Turkish Cypriot newspaper Ortam of 5 August 1997, the historic fourteenth century church of the Virgin Mary, of Byzantine and Renaissance structure, located near the villages of Prastio and Acheritou-Agios Georgios, has been vandalized and is being used as a sheep pen. Moreover, according to information received by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, the Church of Apostle Andreas located in the district of Kyrenia has been converted to a mosque and the Church of the Virgin Mary located in Pano Zodia has been completely destroyed. The Byzantine Church of Saint Sergios and the sixteenth century Church of Saint Paraskevi, located in the village of Agios Sergios, near the ancient area of Salamis, and the surrounding cemetery, have been desecrated and vandalized.

I would point out that the Turkish occupied area of Cyprus contains a large part of the island's archaeological and historic sites, as well as religious monuments, which are subject to severe and extensive destruction, of which Turkey, as the occupying Power, is fully responsible and accountable. Over 100 churches and monasteries in the occupied areas have been plundered and looted of their sacred objects, icons, wall paintings, frescoes and mosaics or converted into mosques recreation areas, animal pens or stables.

On behalf of the Governmen of the Republic of Cyprus I wish to protest strongly these recent acts of destruction and desecration of religious places of worship in the occupied area which are part of Turkey's systematic attempt to destroy and eradicate the cultural heritage of Cyprus in violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions and to request you to investigate the above and to take the necessary steps to stop and reverse these Turkish actions.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council

(Signed) Nicos AGATHOCLEOUS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative